

Terms of Reference

The Allen Consulting Group (ACG) was asked to address the following Terms of Reference.

1. Supplier's compliance with the contract and quality of service delivery.

- (i) The extent to which the supplier, Australian Communication Exchange Ltd (ACE), has complied with the requirements of the current contract with the Commonwealth for provision of the National Relay Service (NRS).
- (ii) The views of key stakeholders on ACE's performance in delivering the NRS consistent with the requirements of the contract.

2. Possible alternative suppliers

- (i) An assessment of the infrastructure, human resources, management and financial capacities required for delivery of the NRS.
- (ii) An assessment of the possibility of viable alternative suppliers existing in the marketplace, taking into account the need for a cost effective and reliable service which is sensitive to the needs of the client group.

3. Management of the NRS

- (i) The efficiency of the service delivery model of the NRS under the current arrangements, including consideration of:
 - incentives and disincentives related to the charging regime in the contract;
 - whether current arrangements for provision of the relay service in Australia represent best practice; and
 - any suggested improvements.
- (ii) The effectiveness of the NRS under the current arrangements, including consideration of:
 - effectiveness in relation to the description of the NRS in s.95(1) of the *Telecommunications (Consumer Protection and Service Standards) Act 1999* (at <http://scaleplus.law.gov.au/html/pasteact/3/3267/top.htm>), ie a service that provides persons who are deaf, or who have a hearing and/or speech impairment, with access to a standard telephone service on terms, and in circumstances, that are comparable to those on which other Australians have access to a standard telephone service;
 - effectiveness in relation to awareness of, and usage by, the target client groups of the service; and
 - effectiveness in comparison to other relay service arrangements.

4. Key issues for the future of the NRS

- (i) With primary emphasis on the period leading up to the end of 2006, provide an assessment of:
- projected future usage of each of the service streams currently offered through the NRS;
 - effect of ancillary and substitute technologies such as e-mail and SMS on current services;
 - any major technological developments or options for delivery of the current services; and
 - any other significant developments and issues in relation to future delivery of access to the standard telephone service to the client group.